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Mayor Tim Kelly Appoints Emily O'Donnell as City Attorney

O'Donnell to be first woman in history to occupy city's top legal office

Chattanooga, Tenn. (April 27, 2021) — Chattanooga Mayor Tim Kelly on Tuesday named attorney and community leader Emily O'Donnell as his pick to serve as city attorney. If approved by Chattanooga City Council, she would be the first woman in history to occupy the city's top legal office.

"Emily is an outstanding attorney and a committed advocate for families. Throughout her career, she has been a champion for women and vulnerable communities, most recently launching an eviction prevention initiative that kept dozens of families in their homes," said Kelly. "As city attorney, I know she will bring the same conviction, compassion, and commitment to the job and will work tirelessly to make our city a more just and prosperous community for all of our neighbors."

O'Donnell spent the first half of her career as an attorney for Legal Aid, providing legal services across the Chattanooga region, from assisting victims of the 2013 Patten Towers fire to litigating in General Sessions, Juvenile, Circuit, and Chancery Courts and the Tennessee Court of Appeals.

As part of her work for Legal Aid of East Tennessee, O'Donnell practiced in Hamilton, Bradley, Sequatchie, Rhea, Meigs, McMinn and Monroe counties, and was involved in a wide range of cases, including housing, domestic relations, employment and consumer issues. She moved on to private practice in 2018, litigating property, contract, probate and business disputes, eventually founding her own firm in 2019 to focus on family law.

"I am honored to have the opportunity to serve our community from the city attorney's office where we will uplift families, uphold justice, and remove the barriers to opportunity that exist for too many of our neighbors," O'Donnell said. "I look forward to serving the people of Chattanooga as their advocate, working alongside Mayor Kelly and the City Council to ensure that all voices are heard, and that residents always have someone in their corner."

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